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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INVESTS IN EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

$636,000 Will Be Used To Fund Equipment On Fixed Wing Aircraft Based In Thunder Bay

THUNDER BAY – The McGuinty government is increasing access to emergency services for angioplasty patients in Northwestern Ontario by investing $636,000 to allow Ornge (formerly Ontario Air Ambulance Services Corporation) to acquire specialized health care equipment, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman today announced.

"By providing the start-up funding for this initiative, we're paving the way for greater access to emergency services for local cardiac patients once angioplasty services are established in the community," said Smitherman.

Patients experiencing problems while undergoing angioplasty treatment may require medical intervention very soon after the onset of an emergency. Due to the distance between Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre to cardiac surgical services, land ambulance transport is not a viable option.

"Our teams of dedicated critical-care flight paramedics provide quality aero-medical transport to patients between facilities" added Dr. Chris Mazza, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ornge. "Timely intervention can mean the difference between life and death for area residents undergoing angioplasty. Ornge is proud to be a significant partner in making that difference count."

The start-up funding announced today will allow for specialized on-board aeromedical critical care transport equipment like a transport ventilator, auto-syringes, a cardiac balloon pump, and an aeronautical transport cardiac monitor.

"Our investment today reflects the McGuinty government's recognition of the unique health care needs of those who live in northern Ontario," said Bill Mauro, MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

"We are proud to make this investment in the health care of Thunder Bay-area residents," said Michael Gravelle, MPP for Thunder Bay-Superior North. "It's of vital importance to increase access to specialized care for local residents in need."

Ornge coordinates Ontario's air ambulance system. Ornge is an independent organization, which operates from 26 bases across the province. Ornge is responsible for transport medicine operations including contracting flight service providers, medical oversight of all flight paramedics, dispatch and authorizing air and land ambulance transfers between hospitals.

Today, Ornge performs over 18,000 patient transport and organ retrieval flights per year across Ontario. On-board aircraft medical care is possible because of a system that features round-the-clock teams of

two paramedics from a total workforce of 244 having the specialized training required to care for patients in the aero medical environment.

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan to build a health care system that reflects the needs of patients and communities, and will keep Ontarians healthy for generations to come.

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